

Social Service Human Relations Board

Minutes of the Regular Meeting, Thursday, October 22nd, 2009

1. **CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL**, President Wasco called the meeting to order at 7:44 p.m. Present were Nielsen, Biggs, and James. Absent were Villareal, Soglin, and Dailey. Staff: Franz

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** Minutes of August 27, 2009 and September 24 Regular meetings were continued to the December meeting due to lack of quorum.

3-A. PRESENTATION OF ALAMEDA FOOD BANK SERVICES – PAUL RUSSELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Paul Russell provided an update regarding the services provided by the Alameda Food Bank (AFB). The AFB is a private non-profit serving Alameda residents exclusively. They have an Executive Director, Program Coordinator, and (thanks to CDBG funding) a part-time staff to assist with the expansion of their programs during the holidays. Originally a 100% volunteer organization, they continue to depend on volunteer staff, and currently have more than 100 regular volunteers assisting with their programs.

The AFB's mission is to provide nutritious food at no cost to the low-income residents of the City of Alameda in a compassionate manner. They offer two programs that can be attended once per month and one program that can be attended once per week. Each of these programs offers an average of 15 pounds of free food per person in the household. They also have a First Saturday program which offers many food selection choices, and is available to all of their participants. The Food Bank expects to distribute 1,000,000+ pounds of food to more than 5,000 Alamedans in 2009.

With the help of reprogrammed CDBG funding in addition to their regular grant, they will expand their Pantry hours by 25% in November and December. Their "Holiday staff person" will arrive before distribution hours to help prepare the site for the increase in participants expected each day.

The AFB is involved in a number of community partnerships:

- This will also be the 3rd year that they will assist in qualifying families for Alameda's Toys For Tots program.
- They continue to provide their participants with flyers and referral information for Rental Assistance, Utility Assistance, other community programs, and 211.
- They host a monthly pre-screening interview for Food stamps.

Rather than expand the type of services they offer, they plan to continue concentrating on providing Food Programs, and referrals to "other professionals in the community".

While not receiving a Stimulus Grant directly, they regularly shop at the County Food Bank (at prices well below wholesale), and benefit from the additional food available there thanks to Stimulus Funding. This is in addition to receiving a great deal of free produce from the County Food Bank.

Paul explained that they are able to serve everyone coming to their programs requesting assistance with food, but also said that transportation is a barrier for some. For those physically unable to come to their sites, they offer a delivery service. They continue to expand their capacity to serve Alameda's diverse community, and are working to have paid and volunteer staff on site (as much as possible) who are able to speak Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese.

Their average household size is 2.5 persons, with ½ of their participants being singles. Some households are two families living in the same apartment. While they still serve many on the West End, they are seeing an increase in participants from Central and East Alameda.

They always could use more volunteers, and appreciate the support from Slow Food, Alameda's Community Garden,

3-B. **RECOMMENDATION REGARDING PROPOSED AMENDMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PUBLIC SERVICE FUNDING FOR FY 09-10**

Terri Wright, Alameda Community Development Manager, explained that there is an additional \$9,825 that has become available for public services in the current fiscal year. The funding is the result of program income from the previous fiscal year.

After deciding to recommend continued focus on safety-net services and collaboration at the March SSHRB meeting, the Board agreed to meet again to re-evaluate public service needs if additional funding became available.

Staff's recommendation as to allocating these funds is based on the opportunity to leverage substantial funds for a program serving Alameda's seniors, and to allow low-income Alamedans to continue to have access to tax preparation assistance. Both programs are consistent with the priorities established by the Board at their March meeting. The \$2,000 grant to APC to continue to administer the VITA free tax preparation site had already been approved. Both programs must be able to spend the money by the end of the fiscal year.

Staff was approached by the City Manager's office to consider using CDBG funds to leverage a substantial grant for a Multi-Hazard Prevention Program focusing on seniors. The program is a partnership between the Alameda Fire Department and Mastick Senior Center, and it will work with other community based organizations in its implementation. It provides a safety prevention assessment and training program to prevent fire and fall-related injuries to seniors, and activities will include assuring that this vulnerable and often isolated population receives safety information, and mitigation measures such as grab bars and smoke alarms. The \$7,825 requested will leverage more than \$65,000 in FEMA grant Funds, and will serve 1,000 individuals.

The Board asked if the program was duplicative of Cardinal Point's similar program for seniors, if the disabled will also have access to the program, and when was staff aware of the additional funds being available.

Staff explained that Cardinal Point may be part of the consortium providing the trainings, and that

Meals On Wheels friendly Visitors Program, Alameda Hospital, and the Cert Program may also be included. The goal is to set this up as a sustainable program that will continue beyond the funding. The program will try to incorporate the disabled community, and many of the seniors assisted will also be disabled.

The funds became available six weeks ago, and staff will be going to Council for approval at the November 3rd meeting.

It was moved to accept the staff recommendation to fund the Multi-Hazard Prevention Program. Staff will draft a letter that will be reviewed by President Wasko.

M/ S Biggs/James Unanimous

3-A (Continued) **PRESENTATION REGARDING THE ALAMEDA POINT**
COLLABORATIVE VITA PROGRAM – DOUG BIGGS, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR -

Member Biggs provided an overview of the VITA program. The VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Earned Income Tax Credit program provides low-income Alameda families with free tax preparation service. The APC assumed administration of this program last year, and is willing to manage the program again this year in order to ensure that 200 Alameda families continue to receive all of the tax refunds and rebates for which they qualify.

This will be the seventh year that the program has been available in Alameda, having previously been administered by the Alameda Red Cross and Alameda Family Services. The program is complicated and needs an agency with capacity to manage it. AUSD and Chipman Middle School, the program site, will continue to be partners in this endeavor, as they have from the beginning. APC will once again apply for a United Way grant to supplement the cost of administering the program, which last year cost APC around \$5,000 of their funds. APC continues to be willing to take it on because of the great value it has to the community.

The 200 Alamedans receiving free tax preparation last year received almost \$250,000 in refunds, and \$100,000 in Child Tax Credits. Some had not filed for years. One of the primary uses of the refunds is to help pay rent.

Volunteers recruited to be trained by the IRS as volunteer tax preparers make an enormous commitment, with studying and training taking place in January, and the program operating Saturdays from the beginning of February to April 15. They need to be certified by the IRS and continue to receive program updates throughout the season. Other volunteers are trained to be greeters and to fill out the intake forms, and APC staff will be answering calls and making appointments.

Most returns are relatively simple, but a number are complicated. APC contracts a Tax Professional, who is also a Tax Law instructor for the County Consortium. After volunteers prepare the return, he reviews it to assure that it is complete, and provides the maximum refund (if applicable) to the participant.

President Wasko thanked Doug for taking on the program, noting that many of her Alameda Family Literacy participants take advantage of the service.

Doug noted that some teachers and other AUSD staff have their returns prepared at the site, and that he would appreciate our assistance in getting the word out.

3-C **WORKGROUP PROGRESS REPORTS**

Assessment and Awareness Workgroup ó Nielsen

Member Nielsen reported that the needs assessment project would take place in 2010/2011, utilizing data we receive from the 2010 census. The workgroup plans to begin working on updating the Resource Guide, and having it available on-line as well as in hard copies. The workgroup will also work on proving resource information in languages other than English.

She added that Terri Wright has been more involved in the Dental Clinic at the College of Alameda.

4. **BOARD/STAFF COMMUNICATIONS, NON-AGENDA**

President Wasko invited all to a Holiday Party at her home on December 4th.

6. **ADJOURNMENT** - M/S (James/Nielsen) to adjourn at 9:45

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Franz
Community Development Coordinator